

House  
504 W. 14th Street  
Austin  
Travis County  
Texas

HABS No. TX-3266

HABS,  
TEX,  
227-AUST,  
14-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HOUSE, 504 W. 14TH STREET, HABS NO. TX-3266

Location: 504 W. 14th Street, between Nueces and San Antonio Streets,  
Austin, Travis County, Texas

USGS Austin East Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator  
Coordinates: 14.621260.3350000

Present owner: Mr. and Mrs. Homer D. Smith  
3600 Balcones Drive  
Austin, Texas 78731

Present Use: Tradition House, antique shop operated by Mr. and Mrs.  
Homer D. Smith.

Significance: The residence of 504 W. 14th Street is typical of the small  
stone houses built in Austin during the late nineteenth  
century.

PART I HISTORICAL INFORMATION:

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Circa 1883-1885. The present owner recalls seeing an inscription on the brick which stated that John G. Palm was the first occupant in 1885. This coincides with listing in the Austin city directories for that period.
2. Architect-builder: Probably James Baird Smith, who purchased the property in May, 1883. According to the 1880 census for Travis County, the thirty-seven-year-old Smith, who was listed as a "carpenter and builder," was born in Scotland. Smith came to Texas at a relatively early age because all his six children, including the eldest who was thirteen, were born in the state. The Austin city directories between 1872-73 and 1906-07, list Smith's occupation as "carpenter," "builder," "architect," and "contractor." Smith died before publication of the 1909-10 city directory.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The following is an incomplete chain of title to the land on which the structure stands. Reference is to the Clerk's Office of the County of Travis, Texas.

1883 Deed May 1, 1883, recorded May 2, 1883, Volume 55,  
pages 470-473.  
William and Henrietta Schroeder and E.W. Ashcraft and wife  
to

James B. Smith  
Lots 3 and 4 "together with all and singular the rights,  
members, improvements, hereditaments and appurtenances."

- 1886 Deed of Trust October 19, 1886, recorded November 10, 1886,  
Volume 71, pages 1-10.  
Between James B. Smith and wife, Mary K., and  
Henry A. Linn and A.S. Johnson.  
Lots 3 and 4 described as "no part of the homestead of the  
said parties."
- 1899 Deed June 6, 1899, recorded June 22, 1899, Volume 159,  
pages 42-44.  
Property sold at public sale.  
Defendants James B. Smith, Mary K. Smith, et al.  
to  
Dillwyn Parrish and James Brown Potter.
- 1901 Deed March 1, 1901, recorded April 24, 1902, Volume 174,  
pages 153-154.  
James Brown Potter (of Newport, Rhode Island) et al. by  
attorney in fact  
to  
E. J. Cavileer  
46' off west side of lot 3, block 177, which included the  
residence at 504 W. 14th Street and to which all the  
following deeds refer.
- 1901 Deed of Trust June 14, 1901, recorded October 23, 1901,  
Volume 169, pages 274-277.  
E. J. Cavileer  
to  
James Brown Potter et al.  
Conditions of deed specified that Cavileer "keep said  
improvements in good habitable repair," and "not, without  
the written permission of the Trustees herein, cut, or  
allow to be cut any wood or timber on said premises, except  
such as may be necessary for domestic use and for the  
preservation and repair of the fences and other  
improvements on said premises."
- 1902 Deed May 8, 1902, recorded October 8, 1902, Volume 184,  
page 38.  
E. J. Cavileer and wife Olivia  
to  
Mrs. Leah B. Copes.

Will of Mrs. Leah B. Copes was not probated in Travis County, but later deeds indicate property divided among Mary E. Copes, H. B. Copes, and Robert J. Hammond and wife Lucie.

- 1912 Deed September 11, 1912, recorded September 19, 1912, Volume 253, page 434.  
H.B. Copes, son and one of three heirs of Mrs. Leah B. Copes, conveyed his one-third interest or "the proceeds of said property now in the hands of Robert J. Hammond" to  
Mary E. Copes.
- 1912 Deed December 9, 1912, recorded September 4, 1915, Volume 276, page 477-478.  
Mary E. Copes  
to  
Robert J. Hammond and wife Lucie.
- 1916 Deed July 21, 1916, recorded August 7, 1916, Volume 286, page 410-411.  
Lucie C. Hammond, "a femme sole"  
to  
Hal Hailey.
- 1917 Deed May 3, 1917, recorded May 8, 1917, Volume 294, pages 345-46.  
Hal Hailey  
to  
J. H. Rogers.
- 1918 Deed September 4, 1918, recorded September 14, 1918, Volume 304, pages 557-558.  
J. H. Rogers  
to  
A. L. Netherly.
- 1921 Deed October 7, 1921, recorded October 8, 1921, Volume 331, pages 585-586.  
A. L. Nether(1)y and wife, Mary Leon  
to  
J. H. Fowler.
- 1924 Deed August 27, 1924, recorded August 28, 1924, Volume 364, pages 321-322.  
J. H. Fowler and wife Blanche E.  
to  
Lucille Clark.

1959 Deed October 5, 1959, recorded January 5, 1960, Volume 2135, pages 79-80.

Lucille Clark  
to  
S.S. Laird

1959 Deed December 24, 1959, recorded January 5, 1960, Volume 2135, pages 73-75.

S.S. Laird of Kilgore, Rush County, Texas  
to  
Homer D. Smith and wife Hazel L.

4. Builders, suppliers:

a. Builder: Probably James Baird Smith

b. Suppliers: James Baird Smith served as contractor for construction of the temporary State capitol in Austin in 1882-1883. According to the original contract dated May 29, 1882, "all material in the Supreme Court building, the Treasury building, and the old Capitol, and the terraces on the Capitol grounds, shall be the property of the Contractor--such of it to be used in the construction of the temporary Capitol as is sound and available; the remainder to be removed by him upon completion of the building..." Smith is believed to have used stone from "the old Capitol" building in constructing the residence at 504 W. 14th Street. No contemporary written accounts were located to substantiate this.

5. Original plans and construction:

No original plans or early photographs of the residence have been located. It does appear on the 1887 Koch map of Austin. Although the map is too small to distinguish many details, there was obviously a balustrade on the center of the roof.

6. Alterations and additions:

According to the present owners, the central back addition, which included a bathroom and a kitchen, was added during the 1890s and the small northeast corner room was added in the mid-1940s. Lucille Clark remembered there being what was considered the original iron fence when she purchased the property in 1924. It was removed for scrap metal during World War II. The present fence was installed by the current owners who are also responsible for the landscaping. Miss Clark put the tin ceilings in the two north rooms.

Since acquiring the property in 1959, the present owners have made very minor changes, most necessitated by the installation of central heat and air-conditioning. They removed the French doors and transom in the opening leading from the front to the rear hall.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The residence at 504 W. 14th St. is typical of the small stone structures built in Austin during the late nineteenth century. It was one of twin houses built on lots 3 and 4 in block 177 of the original city. Although its early history remains vague, it was used primarily as residential rental property from the mid-1880s until its purchase in 1959 by the present owners.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old Views:

Bird's Eye View of City of Austin, Travis County, Texas, 1873. Drawn by Augustus Koch.

Austin State Capital of Texas. Drawn by Augustus Koch, 1887.

2. Primary and unpublished sources:

Austin City Directories, 1872-73 to present, Austin-Travis County Collection, Austin Public Library.

Contracts for Building the Temporary State Capitol at Austin, Texas. Austin: State Printing Office, D. & D. Institution, 1882.

Travis County Census Records, 1880 (Microfilm roll 1329), Texas State Archives.

Travis County Deed Books, Travis County Courthouse, Austin, Texas.

3. Secondary and published sources:

House File, 504 W. 14th St., Austin-Travis County Collection,  
Austin Public Library.

Prepared by:  
Ellen Beasley  
Project Historian  
National Park Service  
July, 1973

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This building is an example of a well-designed, well-constructed small stone house built in the city of Austin during the nineteenth century. The use of cut stone quoins and trim (probably from the old capitol building) is rarely found in small residential structures of this scale in the Austin area.
2. Condition of the fabric: The walls of the original portion, built of brick and cut-stone, are in good condition. Interior partitions remain unchanged; walls have been somewhat redecorated.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The one-story, rectangular original house is 38'-0" across the five-bay front by 30'-7" deep, with the original porch in front, and the later additions of bath, kitchen, and storage on the rear.
2. Foundations: Walls below grade up to the water table are of rubble, ledge limestone. Wall under the front porch is of brick.
3. Wall Construction: Walls, 9" in thickness, are of light, yellow-buff, hard-pressed brick. At the corners of the building and on either side of the window and door openings there are quoins of cut limestone.
4. Structural system, framing: Exterior walls are load-bearing, brick. For the original house the interior partitions are stud framing, plastered over wood lath. Floor and ceiling joists are full 2 x 6's, 24" on center. Roof rafters are 2 x 6's.

5. Porch and stoop: The 7'-10" x 11' front porch has six square wood posts, each with decorative capitals and brackets. At the rear door of the kitchen there is an uncovered stoop of concrete.

6. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: Front doorway opening with transom is 3'-2" x 9'-6"; it is topped with a cut stone segmental arch and edged with quoins. The door is paneled, 3'-0" x 7'-0". The two vertical upper panels are glazed.
- b. Windows: Typical windows are two-over-two-light double-hung sash, 3'-2" x 8'-0," with cut stone segmental arched heads and cut stone quoins.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The main roof is hipped, 3.5 in 12 pitch, with 9' x 16' flat deck on top. It is covered with raised-rib sheetmetal roofing. The deck is edged with pressed sheetmetal cresting. The Bird's Eye View of Austin, 1887, clearly indicates that there was a balustrade around the upper deck.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The frieze is of cut stone; the projecting 18" overhang and the brackets are of wood. The built-in gutter is of sheetmetal.

- C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: The plan of the original structure is rectangular, symmetrically arranged with a small central hall flanked on either side by squarish rooms. Behind these there are three smaller square rooms. Rear additions include bath, kitchen; the recently added storage room is of frame construction.
2. Flooring: Typical oak flooring, probably covering earlier wide-plank wood flooring.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: Masonry walls, framed partitions and ceilings are plastered, painted white. The ceiling of the central rear room, lowered to provide air-conditioning equipment, is of gypsum board.
4. Doorways and doors: Trim on the doorways and windows is molded, 6" in width. Since the building is now used as a decorator's showroom, most of the interior doors have been removed.
5. Lighting: Attractively lighted (not original) with fixtures suitable for nineteenth-century interiors.



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6. Heating and air conditioning: The house was originally heated with iron stoves, probably wood fired. The flues are still in place. It is now heated and cooled with forced-air system installed above the ceiling of the central room.

D. Site:

1. General setting: The interior lot is 126' deep with a 46' south frontage on West Fourteenth Street. The set-back from the front property line is 21'-8" and distance on the sides is 4'-0" to each of the side property lines.
2. Landscape design: 36" wrought-iron fence across the front encloses an attractively designed garden with walkways of brickwork, low hedges and planting beds. There is a similar design carried out in the rear of the house; both spaces were designed recently by Pinkney, landscape architect.
3. Outbuildings: The old kitchen building, 12' x 12', is built of rubble, ledge limestone. To the rear of the old kitchen there is attached a one-car garage built of frame and sheet metal. Adjacent to the alley there is a gravelled parking space.

Prepared by:  
Melvin M. Rotsch, Architect  
Project Supervisor  
National Park Service  
July, 1973

### III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was jointly sponsored by the National Park Service and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Recorded under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, the project was completed during the summer of 1973 at the HABS field office at the University of Texas, Austin. Project supervisor was Melvin M. Rotsch (architect, Texas A & M University); project historian was Ellen Beasley; student architects were J. Tucker Bishop (University of Texas), Stephen J. Farneth (Carnegie-Mellon University), Robert D. Ferland (Cornell University), Carl J. Frenning (University of Pennsylvania), Richard W. Schreiber (Boston Architectural Center), and David J. Yturalde (University of Texas). Photographs were taken in 1974 by Roy Pledger.